

Arthritis Medication And Your Safety

(NAPSA)—A new survey of people with arthritis indicates that many of the 70 million Americans with this painful and often debilitating condition no longer have to live with arthritis pain. They may be doing so because they are confused about the safety of pain medications.

The survey, conducted by the Rippe Lifestyle Institute (RLI), revealed that close to half of arthritis patients polled are confused about the safety of treatment options, leading them to stop or reduce their use of pain relievers. Of this group, more than two-thirds (68%) reported a decrease in overall quality of life due to greater pain and limited physical activity.

“Pain relief is critically important for arthritis patients in terms of their quality of life and activities of daily living,” said James M. Rippe, M.D., an Associate Professor of Medicine at Tufts University School of Medicine and founder and director of RLI.

“I always say to my patients to talk to a doctor, and get good medical advice before even thinking about changing medications.”

Other significant survey findings showed that as a result of changes in treatment:

- Forty-two percent are experiencing more pain than before.
- Twenty-one percent say they have stopped exercising.
- Forty-nine percent have limited their physical activities.

How can patients sort through the confusion about arthritis pain relievers?

One solution: Of those who consulted a doctor about arthritis pain medications, 64 percent reported that their physicians recommended over-the-counter (OTC) pain relievers.



About 80 percent of people with osteoarthritis report limited movement or activities. The condition is responsible for seven million physician visits per year.

“People need to discuss individual situations with a doctor or other health care professional who can help them understand the benefits and risks associated with all pain medications,” said Dr. Rippe. “By doing so, we can substantially improve the standard of care for those with arthritis pain.”

He indicated that health care professionals must help patients distinguish between newer drugs, known as COX-2 inhibitors, and more-established prescription and OTC treatments, such as naproxen, which is sold as Aleve.

“When used as directed, over-the-counter pain medications like Aleve can play an important role in preserving the health and well-being of arthritis sufferers,” Dr. Rippe said. “It is imperative that we in the health care community help our patients sort through this confusing and conflicting information and ultimately help them find the pain relief they need.”

Rippe added that inadequately managed arthritis pain can cause people with arthritis to become more sedentary, which can lead to more-serious conditions such as obesity, high blood pressure and diabetes.